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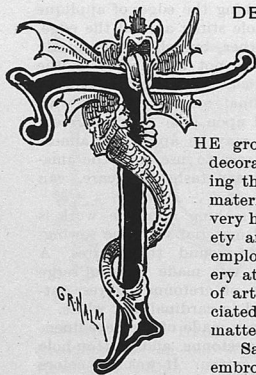
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# THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

## DECORATIVE EMBROIDERY. APPLIQUE.

SECOND PAPER.



THE growing popularity of this form of decoration has been the means of bringing the art of dyeing and preparing the materials used in its manufacture to a very high state of perfection. The variety and range of color in the threads employed in the many sorts of embroidery at present in favor, shows a degree of artistic excellence that is fully appreciated only by those who make such matters the subject of careful study.

Sacred history has much to say about embroidery and fine needle work, and many of the Catholic churches of the old world are rich in the possession of rare embroideries, exquisite tapestries, and laces of almost fabulous wealth.

Linen threads were probably among the earliest materials used in embroidery. Cotton has its uses, and various kinds of fibre have from time to time been experimented with.

It is, however, to wool and silk, in some of their forms, that the decorative artist turns, when really fine durable work is desired. The popular idea in embroidery, is, unfortunately, following in the wake of all other popular arts, and effect is sought after not infrequently to the injury of the quality of the work. The passing fancy sacrifices that which is genuine and calls for cheap and showy goods.

Exceptions are of course made where persons of artistic tastes require finely executed decorations and are willing to pay for them, but where one such customer is found, there are twenty, perhaps half a hundred, who have neither the means to purchase or the training to comprehend or appreciate the higher forms of this beautiful art.

The necessity for something to fill the orders of the masses has led to the introduction of many showy materials which are, when new, quite attractive, but which have no durability, and almost immediately upon use become frayed and matted, and lose all of their freshness and beauty. This form of "art work," as it is called, should not be encouraged and it never is by educated taste. Solid materials alone are worth the time and labor expended on such work.

Fine qualities of English crewel are the most durable and practical materials for reliable work. Silk of various sorts, floss, cords, filling silks, and the ordinary grades of what is generally called embroidery silk, chenille, and many other similar materials are used. Arasene has had some popularity and there are several fringe-like materials that are in general demand for the cheaper and more effective decorative articles with which fancy stores and the household departments of our large establishments are filled.

Novelties in all classes of materials are continually coming into market, and almost every season a marked departure from standard and conservative styles is apparent.

Just how best to produce certain effects is the problem that nearly all amateurs, and not a few professional artists, find themselves puzzled to solve. The intention of this series of articles is to throw as much light as possible upon all perplexing questions in this line of work.

In order, therefore, to secure the best results in all forms of decorative embroidery, it is imperatively necessary that only the best materials should be selected. Even professionals sometimes forget, or at all events appear to overlook the fact that fifty cent materials will never produce fifty dollar effects.

The amateur is much more likely to lose sight of this point, and in this we find an explanation of the reason why so much embroidery that is at first handsome and apparently well made, becomes after a little time dingy and gray, and comparatively worthless.

With the idea so often expressed by many amateurs that if the material is covered it does not matter very much what it is, a few manufacturers, in their endeavors to compete successfully with rival houses, have gradually cheapened their goods until they are little better than trash. The canvas is more dressing than fibre, the silks are weighted, and the wools are filled with flock and cotton. The velour that is supposed to be silk is in reality jute, with possibly a little spun silk of the most ordinary sort. The corded tapestry fabric is made with just enough wool in the warp to give it a surface, but not enough to cover the cotton filling, which shows wherever the needle goes through the goods, or a stitch is drawn even the least particle too tightly.

With this grade of materials nothing but inferior results can be expected. It must not, however, be inferred that cotton, jute, and such material have not their proper and very important uses. It is to their encroachment upon the province of fine and dura-



DESIGN FOR TILE HEARTH, BY CHARLES VOLKMAN.

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ble embroidery that objection is made. There is a decline in the popularity of canvas work, that which is slow and painstaking, and which in decades past resulted in the impossible poodles with black and white ears and pink eyes, and in the traditional and ubiquitous slippers that oftentimes found their way into the missionary box or precipitated themselves in showers into the minister's house on donation occasions.

With canvas work has gone the sampler, over which our grandmother's toiled, and worried, and wept, while the unyielding parent or teacher, with sundry taps of the thimble or switches with birch or willow twig, enforced attention and obedience. In place of these imaginary and geometrical characters and alphabets, more or less decorative, are various styles much less complicated, and decidedly more effective.

Among the many popular varieties of decorative embroidery, applique work is doubtless the most simple and easily managed for effects. Any person with ordinary ingenuity can, with a few hints on the best methods, achieve most admirable results.

If a simple drapery is required, a moderately heavy foundation fabric may be selected. Cut out figures, flowers or leaves from any material that has the desired pattern, baste them carefully upon the ground work, and edge them in any way that may please the fancy. Cretonne figures will be found very effective, or those from any printed fabric. The likeness of the flower or figure saves work and produces excellent results. The edge may be done in buttonhole stitch, chain stitch, or satin stitch. A pretty design was recently finished in cross stitch. The ground was all wool satine curtain stuff. The flowers were cut from a piece of printed cashmere, and were put on with the cross stitch in double Saxony wool. When all was finished, a single tiny stitch in gold thread was taken over the crossing of the wool stitch. The leaves were veined in natural shades of green and autumn tints. The flowers had tiny tufted centres in fine floss silk, and an occasional crystal bead in suggestion of a

dew drop. Another pretty way of finishing the edges of applique flowers, is to work a cord in button-hole stitch around the edge. The stitches should not be close together, but should be firmly set to hold the cord in place. This is not as durable as the button-hole stitching, but with a judicious selection of colors is very effective. A gold cord upon cardinal or olive ground with flowers in natural colors, a silver cord upon pale blue or green, iridescent cords of various sorts that may be applied to almost any shade, all of these are extremely easy to use, and the amateur, with the exercise of even ordinary taste and care, can scarcely go wrong.

A very showy and easy fashion of making applique work is to stitch the pattern upon the ground material with the sewing-machine, and then sew fancy braid around the figures. A charming portiere for a country house was made of wool serge in wood color, with a dado and edge of cretonne figures, outlined with picot edged serpentine braid in cardinal and white.

An alcove curtain for a bedroom was made of birdseye linen, with dado in flowers cut from French cretonne, and button-hole stitched down with heavy embroidery cotton. It was fast colors and had been laundried without the slightest injury.

A novel and effective drapery was recently made by an ingenious amateur. She used petit-point in very dark shades and outlined the figures with cardinal and various tints of green and gold. A chain stitching of gold thread was used for the edge of a vine, and considerably brightened the general sombre effect. When finished, the drapery was exceedingly rich and handsome, although quite dark.

The ready made applique flowers and designs in chenille and velvet make magnificent draperies when properly used. They are designed for the finest work, and although in small pieces and simple sprays they are not specially expensive, they count up very rapidly when handsome work is to be done, and upon rich plush, which is really the only material suitable for a foundation of this sort of applique, they make very costly but exceptionally elegant draperies.

This class of ornaments and flowers is extensively used upon piano and table scarfs, fancy table spreads and lambrequins. There are large establishments where such goods are made up, and enormous quantities of ready prepared materials are put together for the trade. Much of this chenille work is made in New York, and some of the best artistic talent in the city is employed in the designing rooms of these manufacturers.

A very elegant piece of work was recently furnished to order by a leading house. It is a portiere with border and dado in applique on plush. The design is cut from brocade velvet in large floral pattern. The figures are arranged in graceful, sweeping patterns, and are basted firmly upon the plush. The figures around the edges are finished in a row of button-hole edging in the same shade as the plush. Outside of this edge is a row of chain-stitching in gilt thread. The patterns are outlined with gilt cord or with filling silk in shade to match the flowers. A superb piece of work was recently exhibited in the private office of one of our leading Broadway establishments. It was a portiere in old gold plush with dado and border in applique of chenille, plush, and silk in the natural colors of the flowers and foliage. Over the plush ground was a very showy design in trumpet flowers and vines and leaves. Sprays of oak branches were mingled with the vine, and the dark foliage was in admirable accord with the brilliant tints of the flowers and the deep golden ground work.

Another pattern was holly leaves and berries. This was made to order for a wealthy resident of Chicago. There was to be a childrens' Christmas party, and the curtain was necessary to screen the space about a magnificent Christmas tree, probably one of the finest in its setting and ornamentation ever seen in this country. The curtain was of fine white plush. The dado was a hedge of holly with berries, the border at each edge was of holly and mistletoe. The holly was in applique, and the mistletoe in fillosette embroidery. It was lined with white satin and had fringe of plush drops and heavy bullion tassels with strands of crystal beads. It was the embodiment of the Christmas ideal.

In the same general class of applique embroidery may be mentioned ribbon and silk work of various sorts. Much of this is made up with fine chenille hand embroidery. The leaves, flowers and buds are made from silk and plush, which is laid upon the ground fabric and caught down in irregular pattern or with dots. Others are arranged to follow the shapes of flowers or fruits. Narrow ribbon is set in stitches representing the petals of the daisy, the foliage being made of chenille or silk. Roses, lilies, and other blooms are in silk of the color of the flowers, the veinings are of fine chenille or fillosette. There are sofa cushions in this class of work, that are of wonderful beauty and great value. A cover for a cushion was recently sold for \$65, a portiere for \$450.

Holiday season brings out all manner of unique and artistic designs, and as applique work is of all sorts the easiest and most artistic when the results are considered, there is little wonder that the ingenuity of even the best designers is frequently turned in this direction.



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